

Florida Mountain Mining Sites,
Ontario Mine
Silver City Vicinity
Owyhee County
Idaho

HAER No. ID-31-A

HAER
ID
37-SILCI.V
IA-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Columbia Cascades System Support Office
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
FLORIDA MOUNTAIN MINING SITES, ONTARIO MINE

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Location: On northwest side of Florida Mountain; below the Tip Top and south of Empire State mines.

Quad: USGS DeLamar 7.5
UTM Zone 11 519800 E 4762650 N

Date of Construction: 1890s-1930s

Present Owner: Kinross DeLamar Mine Company

Present Use: To be demolished.

Significance: The site is associated with early mining activity (1860s-1880s) in southwestern Idaho.

Recorded by: Barbara Perry Bauer, Madeline Buckendorf

Date: June 1995

Site Description and Layout:

The Ontario Mine site consists of a collapsed building on a hillside ledge, with a shaft located directly behind it. The building faces east, as does the shaft immediately west of it. The construction is wood frame, with a wood foundation and board-and-batten siding. The roof consists of cedar shakes. The building has the remains of a bed frame underneath the roof and 8" diameter pipe. Pieces of machinery and iron bands lie directly below the collapsed structure.

The mine shaft may have been attached directly to the building. The shaft is not as well-braced as the Phillips and Sullivan adits, but it goes back at least ten feet. The cap and posts are 4" x 6", and have no spreaders between the posts. Flat lagging lies on top, covered with log purlins and rafters. Galvanized metal sheeting covers the rafters. The side walls are covered with heavy lagging, consisting of 2" x 12" boards. These walls are braced with rock cribbing to prevent cave-ins. Heavy posts line the shaft, and galvanized metal covers the top of the shaft ten feet back. A vertical plank door covers the shaft entrance.

A waste rock dump is located below the site and to the south at a considerable distance. Another site located between the Tip Top and the Ontario indicates that the waste rock dump may be associated with the Tip Top site, rather than the Ontario. The other site, which is located down the slope and east of the Tip Top mine, consists of an iron cable lying on the surface and posts driven into the ground. These may be the remnants of a tramway or trolley running from the Tip Top to the waste rock dump that was originally associated with the Ontario. Pieces of 8" galvanized pipe also lead down the hill to the rock dump 150 yards south and below the Ontario site. Northeast of the cable lie remnants of iron tracks and wire.

Historic Context:

Although the earliest location notice in Owyhee County records for the Ontario Mine on Florida Mountain is dated July, 1901, newspaper reports on work at the mine began to appear in 1890.¹ Over the next few years the mine was worked regularly and produced enough to support prospector Harry Sullivan. Sullivan, with J. B. Mattenson, owned both the Ontario and the Steuben claims. According to a special edition of the Owyhee Avalanche, Sullivan took \$8,000 dollars from the mine in about 1900.² An article published the following year reported a big strike and later reports concerned Sullivan and Mattenson's sale of the Ontario and Steuben to the newly organized Tip Top Mining Company of New York. The sale must not have been successful, because the property is reported again as being sold in 1908 to the Federal Mining Company and in 1910 to a syndicate of French capitalists. In between the reported sales, and up until 1929, newspaper reports and annual reports filed with the State Mine Inspector for the Ontario and Steuben claims continue to list the owners as Sullivan and Mattenson, then as Mrs. J. B. Mattenson. A 1925 location notice lists John W. Daly as the locator of the Ontario, although Mrs. Mattenson still appears as owner in the reports of the State Mining Inspector for the years 1931, 1935, and 1937. Daly's name is given by the State Mining Inspector as owner of the Daly Group (including the Ontario, Allrey, Payette, Globe, Daly, Vein Dyke (sic), and Grand Central claims) in 1939.³

The earliest development of the Ontario was reported by the Owyhee Avalanche in December of 1890:

"Specimen brought down from Ontario mine of Florida Mtn, owned by Herendon, Sullivan, and Mattison shows good. They run in a cross cut 50 feet cutting ledge 35 feet deep. Now they are starting adit tunnel which will run 150 feet deep on the vein..."

Reports on further mine development are sporadic, but in February of 1896 the Owyhee Avalanche reported that a contract had been let to work on the tunnel and in April that the contractors hired to "...run the Ontario tunnel to the Tip Top shaft have completed the work. They struck the shaft near the 300 foot level 'as square as a die.'..."⁵ A second tunnel may have been initiated in 1908, when two men who leased a portion of the Ontario group from Sullivan began to work a section "to the right, or west of the tunnel out of which Sullivan had taken the rich body ore, three years ago, and only went in eight feet when they struck ground which prospected "way up," the first rumors say \$1,000 per ton."⁶ The information located for this report does not document the further development of a second tunnel at the Ontario mine. Reports filed in 1939 and 1940 with the State Mining Inspector by Daly Mines, Inc. (owner of the Daly Group, including the Ontario, Allrey, Payette, Globe, Daly, Vein Dyke (sic), and Grand Central claims) mention the existence of two tunnels, but do not describe the precise location of either tunnel.

Annual production figures have not been found, but the Ontario group produced significant amounts of gold over the years. A note published December 23, 1893, in the Owyhee Avalanche reported that the Ontario "... is being opened by a cross cut which will cut the ledge at depth. This is a gold property. The 27 ton mill run of a couple of months ago netted the owners \$200 per ton." An article dated August 20, 1902, gives a total production value of \$15,000 for the Ontario and Steuben claims, mentioning that Harry Sullivan made \$8,000 from them in a single season. The next available data concerning production is the 1912 annual report of the State Mining Inspector:

"...This group carries some small shoots of a very rich ore. It shipped 30 tons of ore in 1911 that yielded smelting returns of \$9,000, and a similar amount in 1912 that was milled at Silver City and gave a return of nearly \$200 per ton of free gold." (p. 143)

An article in the Owyhee Avalanche in April of the following year indicates that 1912 was also a successful year for the Ontario group:

"...the Ontario group...was operated on a leasing basis last year and shipped 30 tons of ore that gave a smelting return of \$9000. Mr. Sullivan is working a crew of five men on the ground at present time and has 900 sacks of ore on the dump..."⁴

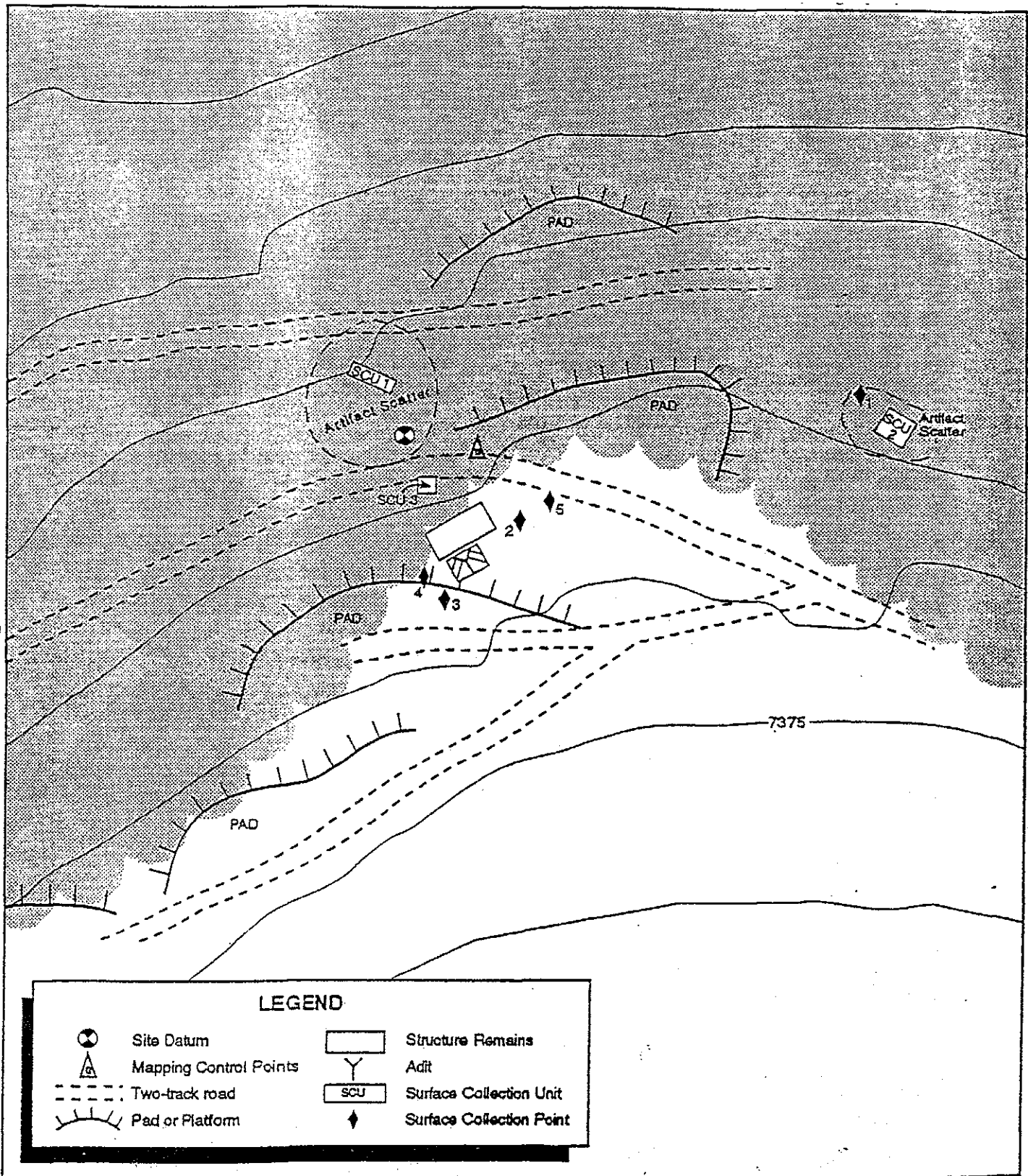
Sources examined for this report do not clearly describe the number of people employed by the owners of the Ontario over time. Early articles in the Owyhee Avalanche and the Silver City Nugget indicate that work may have been done by one or two men. The report filed with the State Mining Inspector in 1913 by the Ontario Mining & Milling Company, which was operating the Ontario Group (consisting of the Ontario, Steuben, and Bull Moose claims), lists a crew of seven men, including mechanics and miners. At least until November of that year the crew required a cook. An article published in the Owyhee Avalanche reported "Henry Hugg, who has been master of ceremonies in the kitchen at the Ontario is now employed in the same department at the

Rich Gulch...."⁷ No other employment statistics are available for the site until 1939 and 1940. In both years Daly Mines, Inc., reported to the State Mine Inspector that company employed a crew of two men to work the claims of the Daly Group (Ontario, Allrey, Payette, Globe, Daly, Vein Dyke (sic), and Grand Central claims).

Descriptions of equipment and facilities at the Ontario are scarce. The 1913 report filed with the State Mining Inspector by the Ontario Mining & Milling Company lists only one 6 h.p. gasoline hoist for equipment and reports no planned additions to the mine plant or equipment. No other equipment lists or site descriptions have been found except those included in the reports filed with the State Mining Inspector by Daly Mines, Inc. in 1939 and 1940. The 1939 report lists no equipment, but by 1940 the mine plant includes a gas engine and blower. The report for 1939 lists two buildings, a cabin and a shop. In the report for 1940 the construction date for the buildings is given as 1938 and 1939. Information regarding more recent operations at the Ontario Mine was not located.

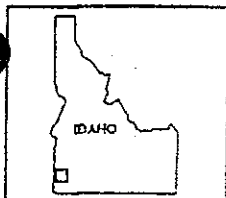
END NOTES

1. Owyhee County Courthouse, Book 12 of Mining Claims, page 364; Owyhee Avalanche, December 5, 1890, p. 3 "Mining Mention."
2. Owyhee Avalanche, Special edition, August 20, 1902, p. 4.
3. Owyhee County Courthouse, Book 18 of Mining Claims, page 276; Annual Reports of the State Mining Inspector of Idaho, 1899-1972.
4. Owyhee Avalanche, April 4, 1913, p. 3, "Gossip of Big Deals."
5. Caldwell Tribune, April 18, 1896, p. 4 "Mining Mention."
6. Silver City Nugget, March 6, 1903, p. 1
7. Owyhee Avalanche, November 7, 1913, "News of the Week."



LEGEND

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| | Site Datum | | Structure Remains |
| | Mapping Control Points | | Adit |
| | Two-track road | | Surface Collection Unit |
| | Pad or Platform | | Surface Collection Point |



ONTARIO MINE

